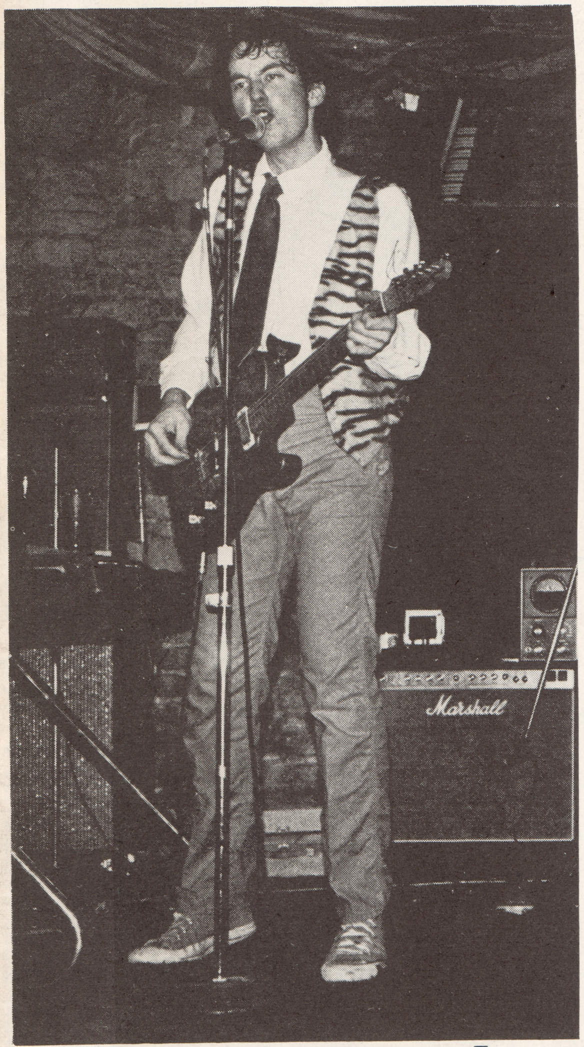
Shake & Pop!

no.4 april '80



the HANK BAND makes the scene

by Francis Volpe

Besides George Harrison's 37th birthday, February 25, 1980, marked another of the Decade's Monday night auditions. As most of you know by now, audition night is that time of week at the Decade when everything from the unknown to the unfathomable gets his/her/their fifteen minutes in the spotlight, with the possible reward of further bookings and a chance of true-to-life fame-if-not-fortune. Legend has it the Iron City Houserockers themselves were catapulted to national significance as a direct result of passing the audition night at Oakland's hottest bistro, and the Puke's public swansong also took place on an equally notorious Monday eve. It could even be argued that the Boomtown Rats may never have written "I Don't Like Mondays" if they'd had to pass audition night at the Decade.

So it was in the hope of writing another chapter in new Pittsburgh musical endeavors that the Hank Band leaped into the lurch on the above-mentioned date and attempted to bring the Mod message to the assembled multitudes. "I love Mod," Hank was quoted the previous weekend. However, Hank's perception of things Mod is not the historical version (Who=official Mod band; Motown & Ska=official Mod dance beat) but the romantic version, which looks at Mod as parallel to the British Invasion. Then, just to confuse things further, the band's selection of covers include pre-Brit and early psychedelic bubblepop/punk like "Too Much To Dream Last Night," "A Question of Temperature," "Sugar Shack," "Beg, Borrow, & Steal," and so on. So the Hank Band isn't bound by philosophical strictures, which in a young group is all to the good.

But they're not trying to be a Sixties Sha-na-na either. Although original material was not in abundance, Hank-penned originals like "Susan" and "My Baby Goes To Prep School" blended in well with the cover tunes, showing his ability to choose material that complements his writing which evokes the British Invasion era with a touch of Jonathan Richman lyrically. Obviously more originals are in order for the Hank Band--they're refreshingly different, especially in comparison to other groups in Pittsburgh.

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FEATURING -

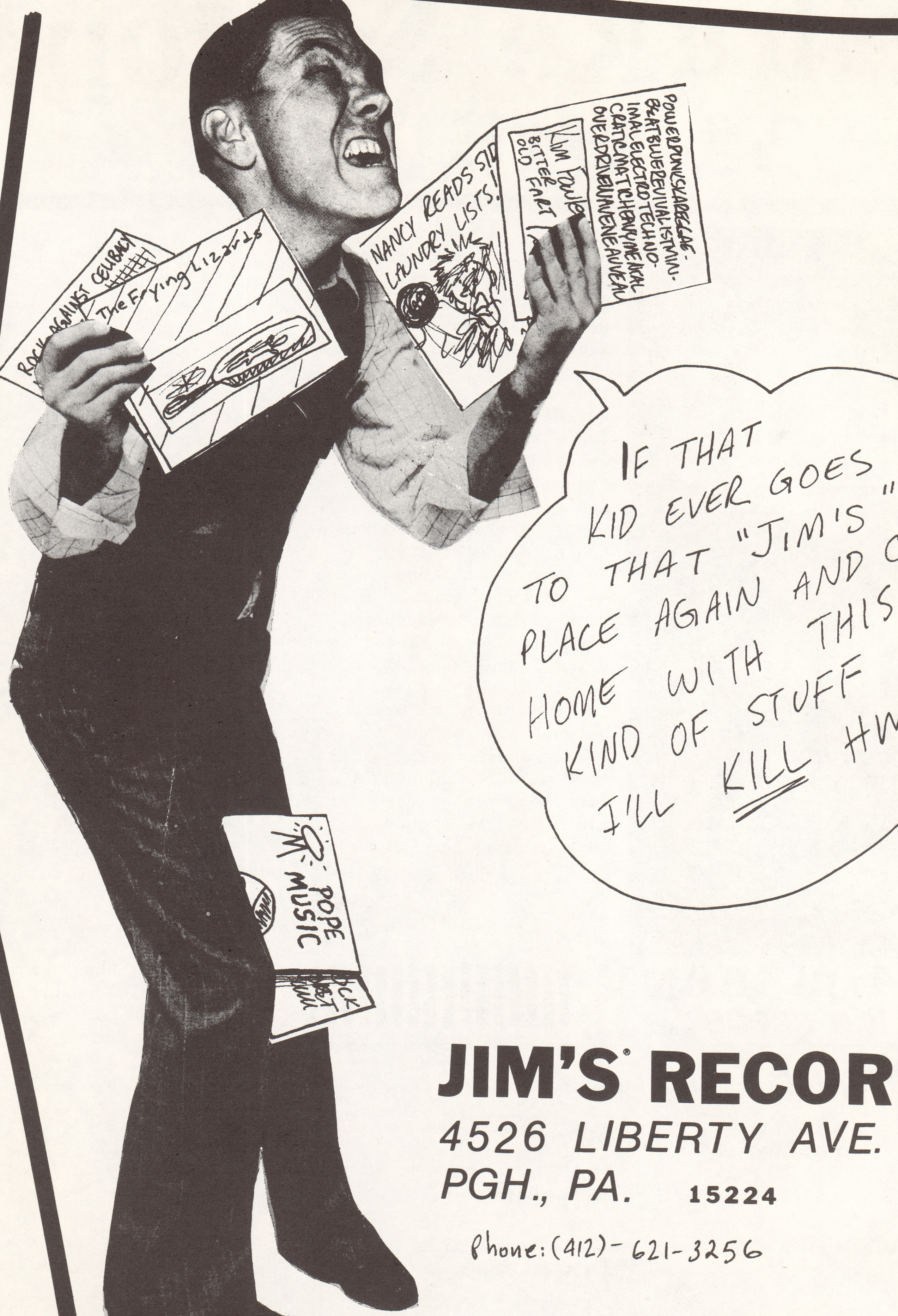
PRETENDERS AT THE DECADE

W.T. Interview

~PLUS~

LOCAL BANDS

NEXT ISSUE: ~KLAUS DRAWS APPLAUSE AT HURRAH'S!!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The Frying Lizards
NANCY READS SID LAUNDRY LISTS!
Kim Fowley BITTER OLD FART
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YOUNG RADISHES + Carsickness.....

By Gnossos Pappadopoulis

"We broke up man, it's our last gig!" And with those words by Mark Pfeifer, The Young Radishes stormed off stage as angrily as they stepped onto it. As a matter of fact, everything The Young Radishes/Mark Pfeifer does is done in anger. His wild and vengeful stage antics recall Iggy Pop or a young puppy on a leash. . .pent up frustration or does he have to take a pee? You see, Mark is serious about this, the audience is very serious about this, the sound man is extremely serious about this, just about everything that happens here tonight is serious! But who can take this cartoon serious?

What many of todays corporate bands lack is vision and energy. Many of Pittsburgh's "punk" bands have vision and energy... but that is all they have. Talent is one ingredient certainly missing. If one out of ten of the local punk muscians (?) exuded any talent it might rub off on the others and a certain amount of acceptance might be forthcoming; as it is these people reject numerous musical and professional tenets and play for the same group of 50 people ad infinitum. . . ad naseum.

Pfiefer's angst aside, he can't sing. . .Dawn can't tune a guitar. . .and the drummer can't hold his sticks to save his life. Stan, the guitar player, holds the band together, or whatever you wish to call it. His chording and leads are very tight and reminiscent (positively so) of Pete Shelley's. Surprisingly enought they cover the Buzzcocks's "Ever Fallen In Love".

All in all, Pittsburgh will not fall; the rivers will not rise and consume us with the demise of The Young Radishes. It just gives some other band 30 minutes to bash it out at one of the many "benefits".

Car Sickness on the other hand are a band, are a band that should eventually, despite the feeble minds of many of the local poseurs make it. As a musician and visionary, Carl has what it takes. Both Steve and ARchie are excellent keyboardists. This night had them using the same drummer that the Radishes utilized...he detracted horribly from their fine work. Carl's phrasing and texturing of guitar over/under/sideways/etc. the keyboards were well done.

Whether it was the drummer or an inherent problem, the only flaw Car Sickness showed was their constant breakdown of rhthym. . .each and every song deteriorated into the same monotous tempo. It seems as if the audience is as much to blame as any technical malady. Their insistance on writing and wrangling on the floor of the bar (literally falling and worming around on the floor) seemed to push the band into that inane "pogo" beat.

Ultimately, any drawbacks Car Sickness displayed that night are attributable to the very people that support them. It was very scary seeing this crowd act as if they were at a coffeehouse of the now dead sixties. . .from the "film" in between sets to the laxxed and cool atmosphere of the crowd. Many of the pubescent males with long hair must have forgotten the times and the "women" choking each other reminds me of times I'd rather leave dead. This group bounced sounds off of their listners who seemed to want not so much to listen, as to be there. With a better PA and an appreciative crowd, it's no doubt that Car Sickness could grow to be one of Pittsburgh's best.

Stuff

FRANCIS VOLPE (See HANK BAND article) is producing live and studio four-track recording sessions for THE CARDBOARDS. . .MADNESS have a four song, 33 r.p.m. EP out soon on STIFF. . . BRAM TCHAIKOVSKY'S new album "The Russians Are Coming" will be called "Pressure" in its U.S. release so as not offend any nationalistic fans. . .BRYAN FERRY is appearing as himself on a French soap opera. What's next--"Hello Lucy? Fix a nice dinner, Eno is coming to our house for dinner.". .FRIPP'S new album "Under Heavy Manners/God Save The Queen" will reportedly consist of two one-sided discs. . .THE CLASH film "Rude Boy" has been released in the U.K. We may see it by the turn of the century. . .THE RESIDENTS are working on a mysterious project being referred to only as "The Commercial Album". . .NASH THE SLASH was thrown out of THE GARY NUMAN TOUR due to his stealing the show. . .New York Asshole-band THE PLASMATICS are currently recording their first album for STIFF.

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Hank Band

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Staging-wise, the band is fun to watch as well. High points are Hank's interplay with the lead guitarist (together they remind one of some unholy teamup of Andy Kaufman and Ted Nugent), the rapid changes of guitars and keyboards, and Hank's assured stage deamenor, especially between songs, which is an area many "professional" musicians haven't quite mastered. As for low points, the type of material the Hank Band performs needs to be performed with a tad more precision, although the energy level carried them over the rough spots pretty well. Tighter harmony vocals would be a plus. And the only thing wrong with Hank's between song patter, is it echoes of Steve Martin; there's enough of that during comedy night at the Portfolio to tide anyone over.

Hopefully, we'll be hearing more from the Hank Band in the future. Let's also hope this wasn't a one-shot performance; Hank's bassist and drummer were borrowed from that famous blue-eyed soul aggregation, the Flashcats, who performed an eye-opening, but too short warmup set. With a more autonomous line-up, the Hank Band could be a group to watch.

Das Flashcatz

SHOWZ

February 25, 1980--The Decade

The Flashcats are a local band, which is usually featured at Sonny Daye's, but on this particular evening, The Decade had the honor of hosting them.

The Flashcats are six men and one woman. They're a big group composed of two horn players, one drummer, two vocalists (one male, one female), one bass player, and one guitarist. They play a rhythm and bluesy style of rock 'n' roll. On this evening, they played a set of all covers, except for "Function at the Junction", their original available on Bogus Records.

They're a jumpy danceable oldies group, and their audiences seem to have alot of fun. The Decade seemed to agree, as they're bringing them back three times in April.

K. Nagle. . . .

THE PRETENDERS
THE DECADE - By John Benign

The Pretenders are as good live as they are on album! It should be of no surprise; but there are bands who cannot pull off a live show. Taking into account the fact this band has been together for just over a year, one could forgive any lack of stage maturity or performance cohesion. Also take into account this: their debut album went gold in England within a month and American radio gave their tacit approval by playing the latest single "Brass in Pocket".

Shunned by some (like the Police. . . another new wave hybrid) as a trendy pop band, The Pretenders have surpassed any expectations many of Britians' stalwarts have held. Chrissie Hynde's songs are getting better and better as heard in concert with their new single "Talk of the Town" and the band has consolidated into one of the tightest live bands I've seen since the Police--for all intents and purposes it is a three-piece band with Ms. Hynde's rhthym perfunctory. Not to deride her playing on "Private Life" where it is actually essential, but the styling os James Honeyman Scott is so filling and fulfilling that she seems to be laying down a lattice-work amongst steel girders.

"Brass In Pocket" ("The only song that went number one in England, and I don't even play the guitar on it. . .") sounds as if there are three guitars... and I was standing right there watching! Pete Farndon and Martin Chambers play such a vital role that to have either of them miss a cue would be tantamount to treason. On "The Wait" Farndon's bass lines bedazzled and on "Private Life" Chambers' reggae drumming surrounded the music with exquisite fills and stops.

And I suppose one cannot supply a complete report without commenting on Chrissie Hynde's stage "sassy". Not only is she todays foremost vocalist, songwriter, or most desired rock and roll persona, Chrissie is the role model for many women who are now becoming part of the enlarging field. What took place in the 1960's with many "girl groups" (Shirelles, Shangrilas, Ronettes) is beginning to happen again. . . Slits, Raincoats, Pat Benatar, Holly and the Italians. . .the emergence of the women in rock and roll.

"Stop Your Sobbing" was a highlight of the night. The rich production of Nick Lowe on disc was transformed to the stage where the power of Ray Davies' song let loose. There was another number done in sound check, but not heard during performance. . ."The Conversation". In style and structure it is similar to "Private Life". . .slow and

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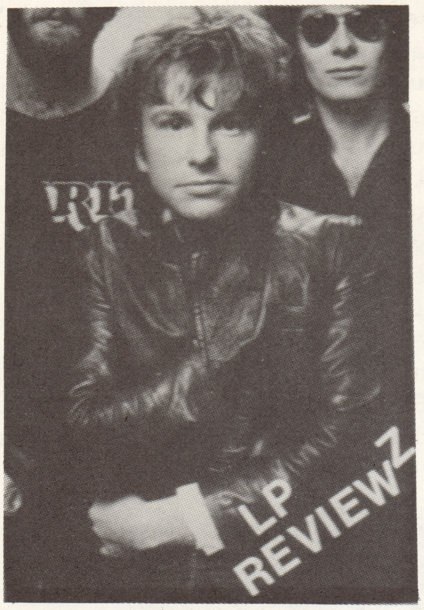


WRECKLESS ERIC--Big Smash (Stiff)

Its really difficult to like this album. Not because of Eric's material--he's still writing infectious, two-fisted pop and his back-of-the-throat vocals are charming as ever. So what's the problem ? It's one of dissillusionment: months ahead of time Stiff was tantalizing us with announcements that Eric's new outing would be their first double album with fancy gatefold sleeve, and would contain 25 songs.

Actually, it is and it isn't. Two sides of "Big Smash" are "Whole Wide World", the American LP which features selections from the nutter's first two albums and various singles. Now, this column isn't supposed to be Consumer Reports, but it does seem a bit shaky and unfair to fans. "Big Smash" could have been a strong third album by an artist on the verge of perfection, but Stiff's marketing department makes the whole package leave a bad aftertaste.

LIZZY MERCIER DESCLOUX--PRESS COLOR (ZE Records)

Electronic, very enjoyable post-punk disco from ZE, which may well become one of the most intriguing labels of the 80's. Lotsa fun.

THE SKA--Mango Jones and his Orchestra(VJ)

Discovered in a used record bin, this is a great exploitation album. A pseudo-live recording with introductions in Spanish, they do some unvelievable things, including a classic "Ska La Bomba". The cover shows a party with dancers that look like the teenagers you used to see on The Dick Van Dyke Show. Poor Mango, he tried to capitalize on a craze that wouldn't catch on for another 20 years!

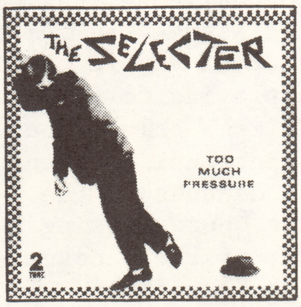
MR. PATRIDGE--Take Away (Virgin)

Andy Partridge, XTC's guitarist and resident madman took some XTC recordings and extracted some (many) tracts, added new instruments, new vocals and lyrics and generally mangled them into an album. Heavy dub techniques applied to rock 'n' roll music. The best description is on the album cover itself: "If you liked "Go +" then this record weighs approximately the same amount."

PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITEDSecond Edition
Edition

PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED--Second Edition

Cheaper than the "Metal Box" version and it has the lyrics printed on the cover. Musically, you know what to expect.



THE SELECTER--Too Much Pressure" (2-Tone)

If you liked "Intensified" you'll like the Selecter LP. The most faithful to the original ska bands. Real dance music.

TH' CIGARETZ--CRAWL RITE OUTA MY SKIN" (Cancer Records)

Mindless "I'm so Bored" punk posturing that might have been an okay joke five years ago. Not worthy of the hand-screened record cover it comes in.

The Return of the Durutti Column (Factory)

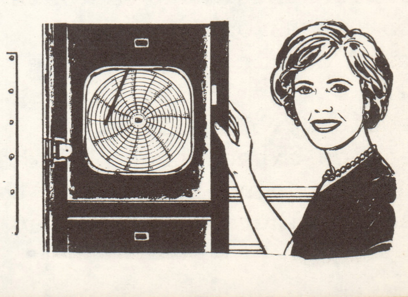
Background: One musician (Vini Reilly), guitar plus studio tricks. Packaging: Sandpaper cover (only possible reason for purchase). Comments: More ambient than "Music for Films". Nothing new. suggestion to make record more interesting: Rub surface of record with cover. Question: Is this album Necessary?

Pretenders

from page 4

rhthymic. During the check, Honeyman Scott's guitar solo was unbelievable! All over the neck of the guitar. Due to lack of judgment, The Decade allowed too many people in the doors and the Fire Marshal shut down the show. This song was unfortunately not performed.

Excess has been seen as a fixture of past musical avenues--many of the recent British bands have done well with three-pieces. Not the three-piece idea of Rush that knocks you into oblivion, but the coherent work of three instrumentalists putting out solid full music. The Pretenders are just one in a long line of groups that have rejected the old precepts and forged ahead with the new.



zeroing in on WT

by j.spitznagel

W. T., creator of WYEP's Modern Music show has been and still is a major contributor in making new music available to Pittsburghers.

SP: How long have you been on WYEP?

WT: June of 1976, First Wednesday of June '76, I did Wednesday afternoons up until December 1977 Thursdays nights started at the Jazz Show, and I think about July of 1978 and continued in that format until the end of the year. And then the rock format, I just moved that over to Thursday night, when Wednesday afternoons. Also the response to the Jazz Show was not very satisfying.

SP: I can remember when you did that, I think alot of your faithful listeners stayed with you.

WT: I would get requests for rock stuff on the Jazz Show, ocasionally, I'd throw one in just for the hell of it, I like shaking people up. Challenging peoples expectations of what they're going to hear on the radio. There was a survey done by someone doing market research for one of the big consulting firms in which it was found that the principal tune-out factor in radio was not an unliked record or an offensive disc jockey, or a commercial/commercials, the thing that made people tune-out more often than anything else, was shown to be any programming that did not conincide with that listener's image or overall conception of what the station should be. If that is the case, I must have new listeners every quarter-hour. I'd like to challenge that.

SP: I'll assume the majority of the stuff you're playing you're playing for yourself

WT: It is a balance between taste, personal judgment, and the demands of the audience, but striking a balance, if the record is really bad, even if I get requests for it, I don't see why I should be obliged to play it. I can't tell you how many requests I have had for "Sit On My Face Stevie Nicks", and I just won't play it. I think it's an offensive insulting record, Other DJs on the station play it, but let them play it. I don't want to, that's three minutes that I could be giving of valuable air time to something, that I think is a little more deserving, especially when you only have three hours.

SP: Not judging by requests, do you ever play things that you think people want hear? Do you ever sit there and say, "I know so many people with this taste are listening to the show, I'll play this for them."

WT: Well, I'll give you an exact example of that; two years ago, maybe, quite a while ago, when I walked into Jim's Records, and saw your average garden-variety punks, with your leather jackets and safety pins buying reggae records, that told me something. Consequently, I was obliged to play reggae on the program, which I've always liked anyway, but didn't really think I could get away with, and the response to that has been good, which is fine with me because since I took the jazz out, its been sounding too white, for my taste.

SP: What I can't really understand on your show, is how you can play Pere Ubu and other avant garde new bands who work within the new wave format, and still can't get away with playing alot of jazz, like you used to play.

WT: I think it is just again, peoples' impressions. If they see some middle-aged black guy on the cover of a record, or if they see some spiffy industrial modernist scene, I don't know, that influences their impression of the music. I can't understand it myself, I feel that there is, possibly it is the sort of thing that the industrial designer, Raymond Larelal (sic), who in his career designed everything from lipstick tubes to cars, to the interiors of Skylab, and he has a theory, which he calls MAYA, Most Advanced, Yet Acceptable, which holds that response to a given advance in design by its potential customers is an incremental one, it is by degrees. You can only go so far toward the next step, before it will be rejected as too far-out by a majority of the potential customers, even though a more sophisticated design might be perfectly feasible technologically, or economically. I think its the same thing with music. Pere Ubu, people might be able to follow, because of the rock instrumentation, the vocals, the rhthyms, other elements that are familar to them, even though some of the other things going on they may not be, where Cecil Taylor is something else again, thats coming from jazz tradition of rhythm and harmony, jazz instrumentation, all acoustic, thats the only thing I can think of.

SP: Two years ago, when you were doing the show it was alot different than what you are doing now. Was it because you were experimenting, or just having fun with yourself, as a radio enitity?

WT: The responsibility is greater now to provide something that meets the listeners' expectations. But roughly what it comes down to, apart from the idea that what I'm doing now is a Thursday night radio show, it is a night time show, therefore, more emphasis on music and more carefully defined selection of music. About the first year I was obliged by a station philosophy as much as anything else, to be very eclectic. The philosophy of WYEP back then was play a real mish-mash, a policy I have never believed in myself. You turn on WYEP and you hear a bluegrass record followed by a doo-wop record, followed by a punk record. And I was always being hassled for playing too much capitalist pig rock and roll on my show. In some ways I think what I was doing then was more successful than other peoples in that area because I tried to maintain certain clearly defined perimeters, and the reason why I went into a heavy personality approach, was partly in order to serve as a unifying element and provide continuity for this fairly off-the-wall mixture of music. With the changes in the program directorship of the station, and other such things, I was able to slowly narrow the focus of the program to the point where the second year or so, I could concentrate on developing the personality rather than the music. The first year was more or less experimenting with music and combinations of music, with very little talking, the second year was pretty much given over to developing a personality, a persona on the air, which is in some ways just an exageration of my own personality, coupled with a very large dose of irony, and alot of parody of certain radio archetypes that people have taken for granted over the years. Then, this past year has been given over to putting together the Modern Music concept, which I now have more or less in place, it what I want to do with that, and I'm now concentrating more on the overall context in which that music appears, that is, rather than thinking in terms of one song, thinking in terms of groups of songs or a three-hours' worth of songs. Also, at the same time, the music is not as narrowly defined because whatever you call punk or new wave as we've come to know these terms, no longer predominates, theres alot of other stuff going on now, too.

— CONT. NEXT PAGE

w.t.

SP: Its always possible that you could get changed in hours again. Do you look forward to thinking about taking another approach?

WT: I'm starting that already. As the music itself evolves though, its no longer very a linear sort of thing. You've got so much happening at once that can be incorporated into the basic Modern Music concept, that is why terms like punk and new wave were always barred from the show, its Modern Music. What happens when punk is old, what happens when something else comes along. Punk is already old, that was the music of three years ago. The music that has been done since has built on that tradition, but its a far cry from what the Sex Pistols were doing back then, its very different, even the Ramones are not doing what they were doing at the outset, and they're one of the most consistent bands I know: Modern Music, as a concept, will endure, although within a year, it may sound nothing like what it started out sounding like, when I started doing Monday nights. Even now you may notice very little sterotyped punk music, except maybe as oldies. Because of whats being done now, the electronic garage music, whatever you call that stuff, the Ska thing, music like that.

SP: Now that some new people are starting to get played on more established FM radio, what do you think will happen?

WT: If Elvis has a hit, watch all the hip people, the ones that want to think that they're one step ahead, they'll be a step behind, you know, they'll dump their Elvis records and go out and buy, God knows what.

SP: The feeling I get though, is that either they're playing it as a favor to what they think the minority want to hear and saying here it is we're playing it for you, aren't we great, or I get the feeling that they're just playing it because someone told them to play it. Thats what upsets me.

WT: I think the reason why stations like a WDVE are finally getting on this stuff is too, is their target audience, which is your basic teenage listenership, wants to hear something new. You your basic teenage listenership, wants to hear something new. You know, there are two kinds of music that are automatically entirely unacceptable to your average teenager listener; one, is the music the listener's younger sibling listens to; the other is the music the listener's older sibling listens to. Consequently, artists like Led Zepplin, artists with considerable staying power, are being rejected now. Something else had to come along, and disco wasn't it. Suddenly new wave is starting to look good. You saw all the 15-year old kids at the Gary Numan concert in their narrow ties and everything I'm sure. And they're buying Blondie records, they're buying Nick Lowe records, they might not be buying Pere Ubu records, not yet, but they're buying The Pretenders, and they're buying Video Killed the Radio Star.

On the air ... With W.T. ...

SP: Will it change things, or take over?

WT: It won't take over all together, yet.

W. T. can be heard on WYEP-FM, 91.5, every Thursday from 9:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.

Three other recommended evening DJ's on WYEP are Concrete Window, Benny Profane, (who alternate shows on Fridays from midnight shows on Fridays from midnight to three), and Francis Volpe (Saturdays, also from midnight to three).

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